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ABSTRACT

The report describes activities of a project designed to increase understanding and improve management skills of parents of neurologically impaired/learning disabled children. Parents (N=303) registered for a 12 session parent training workshop conducted by a school psychologist or social worker with assistance of special education teachers, and the workshops offered group discussions, sharing, role playing, and behavioral shaping. Objectives were not attained, due perhaps to low attendance and high turnover within groups. Suggestions are made for future parent training approaches, including use of smaller target populations and a wider variety of formats. (CL)

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FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

SEQUENCE #: 43-01-4015

NYC I.D. #: 5001-62-14507

ESEA TITLE IV PART C PROJECT REPORT
1980-81 COVER SHEET

Name & Address of School District: NEW YORK CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
110 LIVINGSTON STREET
BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11201

Congressional Districts: 6-23

Title of Project: SKILLS FOR PARENTING THE NEUROLOGICALLY IMPAIRED/ LEARNING DISABLED CHILD

District Enrollment: 943,805 PUBLIC; 309,787 PRIVATE

Curriculum Area: SPECIAL EDUCATION

Target Population: 204 PARENTS

Grade Level(s): DOES NOT APPLY

Type & Number of Direct Participants in Project:

	Public	Private	Total
Pupils			
Teachers			
Others	204	0	204

Total Number of School Districts Served by Project: 1

At End of This Budget Period, Project Will have Been Funded by Title IV-C: 2 YEAR(S)

Fiscal Year Source of Funds: 1981 Budget Period: 7/01/80 To 9/30/81

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EC 127789

ABSTRACT

SEQUENCE #: 43-01-4015

NYC I.D. #: 5001-61-14507

1. School District : NEW YORK CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS 943,805
   Name K-12 Enrollment

2. Title of Project : SKILLS FOR PARENTING THE NEUROLOGICALLY IMPAIRED/ LEARNING DISABLED CHILD

3. Type of Grant : DEVELOPER

4. Total Budget : $51,248 5. Pupils Served: Does Not Apply

Needs Statement Summary

Parents of neurologically impaired/learning disabled (NI/LD) children face unique problems in promoting their children's educational, emotional and social development. They recognize these problems and seek help. Among the skills they need is the ability to manage the daily behavior of their children and to participate in the planning of their children's individual educational programs.

Major Objectives

1. Increase in parents' understanding of their children's maturational status and instructional needs.
2. Significant improvement in attitude toward their children's status and needs.
3. Significant improvement in parents' ability to manage their children's daily behavior.
4. Significant improvement in children's behavior at home as perceived by parents.
5. Significant improvement in children's behavior in school as reported by teachers.

Major Activities

A total of 204 parents registered for twelve-session parent-training workshops. Eighteen groups of approximately 12 parents each were organized according to geographic location. Each workshop series was conducted by a school psychologist or school social worker with additional input from special education teachers. Methods included group discussions, the sharing of experiences common to group members, behavior management approaches, verbal role playing and behavioral shaping. A manual was developed for the use of group leaders.

Major Evaluation Findings

The Objectives were not attained. This appears to be a consequence of low attendance and high turnover within groups.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE		Page
	ABSTRACT	ii
I.	NEEDS	1
II.	OBJECTIVES	1
III.	ACTIVITIES ACCOMPLISHED	2
IV.	EVALUATION	8
V.	PLANS FOR CONTINUED OPERATION	14

LIST OF TABLES

TITLE	Page
Table 1 Frequency distribution of the numbers of sessions conducted for the eighteen workshop series	6
Table 2 Cumulative frequency distribution of the number of workshop sessions attended by parent participants	7
Table 3 Summary of the parent responses to the 13 multiple-choice questions	10
Table 4 Summary of the comparisons between mean pre- and post-workshop scores on the three subscales of the parent questionnaire	11
Table 5 Comparisons of mean gains of students of participating (treatment) and non-participating (control) parents on seven VORT BCP Strands	13

SKILLS FOR PARENTING THE
NEUROLOGICALLY IMPAIRED/LEARNING DISABLED CHILD

I. NEEDS

Parents of neurologically impaired/learning disabled (NI/LD) children have expressed a need for training to help them promote the educational, emotional, and social development of thir children. Specifically, parents evinced needs for training in the daily management of their children's behavior and participation in the planning of their children's individual educational plans (IEP's).

II. OBJECTIVES

Five program objectives were specified: three related to parent-centered changes and two to pupil development. The parent-centered objectives stated that:

> --seventy-five percent of participating parents will demonstrate understanding of the information presented at the workshop sessions by responding correctly to a multiple-choice question based on each session's content;
>
> --participating parents will show a significant ($p<.05$) positive change in attitude toward maturational status and instructional needs of the learning disabled child as measured by a five-point Likert-type scale designed for this purpose; and
>
> --participating parents will show a significant ($p<.05$) improvement in daily management of their children's behavior as measured by a five-point Likert-type scale designed for this purpose.

The child-centered objectives stated that:

> --children of participating parents will demonstrate significant improvement ($p<.05$) in behavior at home, as measured by the child behavior scale of the parent questionnaire; and

--children of the participating parents will demonstrate significantly greater improvement ($p<.05$) in behavior at school than a matched control group, as measured by the VORT Behavioral Characteristic Progression (BCP).

III. ACTIVITIES ACCOMPLISHED

This section describes the activities accomplished during the program's two years of E.S.E.A. Title IV-C funding: 1979-80 and 1980-81.

During the 1979-80 project year, a total of 99 parents registered for parent-training workshops with 93 participating fully in the program. During July and August 1979, program planning and development proceeded as proposed. The content of the twelve-session workshops was defined and a preliminary bibliography of content-related publications was prepared. Preliminary evaluation instruments were constructed including a series of post-session informational questions related to the content of each workshop and a questionnaire to measure changes in (1) parental attitude toward their children's maturational status, (2) the ability of parents to manage their children's behavior, and (3) changes in child behavior at home. To construct subscales for the measurement of each objective, the preliminary questionnaire, used during 1979-80, was factor analyzed. The final selection of items for each subscale was based upon the measurement of internal consistency.

Program awareness was promoted by the distribution of announcements, in both English and Spanish, to the teachers and parents of all students in every HC-30 class for the neurologically impaired and classes for the neurologically impaired/emotionally handicapped in Brooklyn. Announcements were also sent to representatives of nonpublic schools, parent members of the Association of Brooklyn Learning Disabled and Brain Injured Citizens (ABLD/BIC), and three

private schools whose parents had expressed interest in program participation. These announcements also surveyed the scheduling preferences of parents. Workshop leaders and teachers were selected and trained during October. Training sessions included discussions of the goals of the proposal, content of the workshops, administration of the questionnaires for program evaluation, and procedures for the recording and reporting of per-session attendance.

Fall parent workshops began in November 1979. Five separate groups were formed: one met during a weekday morning, two during weekend afternoons, and two on Monday and Wednesday evenings. The sessions were conducted by school psychologists and school social workers and provided content concerning (1) child developmental and maturational sequences as influenced by both general norms and neurological impairments and learning disabilities, (2) parent-child interaction and behavior management patterns, and (3) techniques to promote the educational development of NI/LD children at home. The latter topic included demonstrations and presentations of materials by a master teacher experienced in special education programs for NI/LD children. The specific content and sequence of the training sessions varied in accordance with the interests and concerns of both the workshop leaders and the parent members of each group. The parents were allowed to role play typical or troublesome interactions which enabled them to observe their own behavior as it contributed to the situation. The parents were helped to practice behaviors which, as elicited from them, reflected more positive communication, and made them better able to meet their objectives.

In addition, the program conducted a general session in June 1980 entitled 'Helping Your Child For the World of Work'. An open-house session

was held at the ABLD/BIC Center to acquaint parents with the program and elicit participation for the following project year.

An additional special session was held on June 4, 1981 for all parents who had participated in the program. A panel of specialists in vocational training and special education work-study programs and a representative of a company which employs staff who have handicapping conditions, offered a discussion of vocational and career issues.

During the 1980-81 school year, the program was expanded to serve 18 groups of parents: four during the fall and 14 in the spring. Of the 18 sessions, four were held in the morning, two during the afternoon, and 12 during evening hours. Although the proposal specified that weekend sessions would also be offered, neither sites nor workshop leaders were available.

The workshops were led by psychologists and social workers who were members of the School-Based Support Teams (SBST) of the Board of Education's Division of Special Education. Group leaders conducted the five sessions as part of their regular assignments. Those who led evening sessions received stipends from the project's Title IV-C grant.

The workshop leaders attended one orientation meeting held prior to the start of the fall sessions; a similar orientation was held for the leaders of the spring groups. These leaders convened for a second meeting after the second or third week of parent training, and again about three-quarters of the way through the sessions, to review their experiences.

The leaders had responsibility for designing the format and specific content of the workshops; the program administrators specified the general topics. Interviews of the program administrators revealed that this mode of operation was designed so that each workshop would be responsive to the

specific needs and characteristics of the participants.

During the 1980-81 project year, a total of 204 parents registered for the workshops and attended one or more sessions.* Registration totaled 78 parents during the fall and 126 in the spring. Due to participant attrition, only four of the 18 workshop series completed the full twelve-week cycle. Table 1 presents a frequency distribution of the actual number of sessions for the 18 series of workshops. The mean number of sessions was 9.5. Almost 60 percent of the groups met for at least ten sessions.

For the 15 groups reporting enrollment and attendance data, the mean enrollment was 13.6 parents. Table 2 presents the frequency distribution of the number of sessions attended by the parent participants. Twenty-six percent of the parents attended at least four sessions. The mean number of sessions attended by registrants was 2.7; the median was two and the mode, one. The patterns of attendance for the fall and spring series and the 1979-80 and 1980-81 project years were similar. Typically, attendance peaked during the fourth session and then steadily declined, so that by the time a group disbanded, only one or two parents were still in attendance.

A manual for group leaders was developed during the second project year. It contains materials used in the program as well as a description of the training process and the specific skills taught to parents.

This program was a very demanding one, requiring considerable skill and effort on the part of group leaders and program coordinators. Indications are that it expanded too rapidly in a setting which was undergoing transition in its service-delivery systems.

*These data exclude three of the 14 spring workshops, for which attendance and registration records were not reported.

TABLE 1

FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF THE NUMBERS OF
SESSIONS CONDUCTED FOR THE EIGHTEEN WORKSHOP SERIES

Number of Sessions	Number of Series	Relative Percent*
12	4	26
11	1	7
10	4	26
9	2	13
8	1	7
7	2	13
4	1	7
No Data	3	-
Total	18	

*Based on a 15 workshops; the three workshops not reporting data were omitted.

TABLE 2

FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF THE NUMBER OF WORKSHOP SESSIONS ATTENDED BY PARENT PARTICIPANTS

Number of Sessions Attended	Number of Parents Attending	Relative Percent	Cumulative Percent
10+	5	2	2
9	4	2	4
8	6	3	7
7	8	4	11
6	14	7	18
5	7	3	21
4	11	5	26
3	20	10	36
2	36	18	56
1	93	46	100
TOTAL	204	100	

IV. EVALUATION

Evaluation procedures followed the design specified in the original proposal and modified during July 1980. This section presents a description of the methods employed in the evaluation of the five program objectives and the major findings.

For Objective 1, to determine whether 75 percent of the participating parents of NI/LD children understood the major points of information imparted in the workshops, a multiple-choice question was prepared for each session. Leaders were instructed to ask the appropriate question orally at the end of each session and record the number of parents selecting each of four options, only one of which was correct. Although the workshops were scheduled for 12 sessions, 13 questions were constructed and presented to the parents. The topics that these questions referred to were as follows.

--Question 1. Homework cooperation, home and school.
--Question 2. How children with special needs may manifest their handicaps.
--Question 3. Dating; concerns of adolescents; independence.
--Question 4. Vocational and pre-vocational preparation.
--Question 5. Sibling relationships.
--Question 6. Interactions: child/family; others.
--Question 7. Independence.
--Question 8. Behavior modification; discipline with limits.
--Question 9. Reading, homework.
--Question 10. IEP.
--Question 11. Discipline.
--Question 12. Peer relationships.
--Question 13. Homework; relationships.

Table 3 presents a summary of the parents' responses to the 13 questions for all 18 parent groups. These data indicated that the 75 percent criterion was attained for only four questions: Question 2, answered correctly by 87

percent of the participants; Question 6, 82 percent; Question 10, 80 percent; and Question 13, 85 percent. The overall rate of correct responses across all questions was 67 percent. Accordingly, Objective 1 was not attained.

It is interesting to note that the questions for which the criterion was attained, (i.e., Questions 2, 6, 10, and 13,) were among those which addressed the basic needs for which the program was designed. Many of the remaining questions pertained to areas that were essentially elaborations of these four basic issues.

For Objectives 2, 3 and 4, a 13-item questionnaire, administered to parents at the first and last meetings of each workshop series, was used to determine whether statistically significant increases were observed in: parental attitude toward the maturational status and instructional needs of NI/LD children; parents' ability to manage their children's behavior; and child behavior at home, as reported by their parents. The 13 items included five relating to parent attitudes (Objective 2), four dealing with parent management of child behavior (Objective 3), and four measuring parental perceptions of child behavior in the home (Objective 4). The items were interspersed and randomly alternated between ascending and descending scoring scales, to avoid an obvious pattern. The scores of the parent responses to the items for each objective were summed and the mean pre- to posttest gains were compared through t tests for correlated means. Because of the transient attendance patterns and the truncation of the number of sessions of most series, only 17 pairs of matched pre- and post-workshop responses could be obtained. Analyses of these data, presented in Table 4, showed that there were no significant changes; none of the three comparisons proved statistically signifi-

TABLE 3

SUMMARY OF THE PARENT RESPONSES TO THE 13 MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS

Question Number	Number of Correct Responses	Number of Incorrect Responses	Total Number of Responses	Percentage of Correct Responses
1*	5	8	13	38
2	14	2	16	87**
3	4	4	8	50
4	11	6	17	65
5	4	4	8	50
6	23	5	28	82**
7	25	9	34	74
8	19	18	37	51
9	13	13	26	50
10	27	3	30	90**
11	33	16	49	67
12	11	12	23	48
13	28	7	35	80**
Total	217	107	324	67

*The topics of the questions are presented on the preceding page.
**Attained the 75 percent criterion.

TABLE 4

SUMMARY OF THE COMPARISONS BETWEEN MEAN PRE- AND POST-WORKSHOP SCORES ON THE THREE SUBSCALES OF THE PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Objective*	Test	N	Mean	S.D.	Md**	S.D.d.***	t(d.f.)
2	Pre	17	15.47	4.03	-1.59	5.00	-1.27 (16)
	Post	17	14.88	4.72			
3	Pre	17	15.06	2.97	-0.65	2.69	-0.97 (16)
	Post	17	14.41	2.00			
4	Pre	17	13.71	2.97	-1.00	3.16	-1.27 (16)
	Post	17	12.71	3.62			

*Objective 2. Parent attitude toward the maturational status and instructional needs of the NI/LD.
Objective 3. Daily management of students' behavior by parents.
Objective 4. Child behavior at home.

**Md = Mean difference between pre- and post-workshop scores.

***S.D.d = Standard deviation of the mean differences.

cant at the .05 level. The data did not show the expected increases in parent attitude, parent behavior, or parent reports of child behavior at home.

For Objective 5, to determine whether children of participating parents demonstrated improved behavior in school, the classroom teacher of each child of a participating parent was asked to indicate which objectives on selected VORT BCP strands the child had mastered in September 1980 (pretest) and in June 1981 (posttest). The differences between pre- and posttest mastery scores was the gain in mastery for the project year. Gains were measured in seven strands: Strand 23, Adaptive Behaviors; Strand 24, Impulse Control; Strand 25, Interpersonal Relations; Strand 26, Responsible Behaviors; Strand 28, Self-Confidence; Strand 32, Attention Span; and Strand 33, Task Completion. Since mastery of new objectives could be a consequence of classroom instruction or other factors unrelated to the project, the same information was obtained for a matched control group of children of non-participating parents. The control group was established by selecting, for each treatment child, the like-sexed member of the same class closest in age to the treatment subject; non-English-speaking treatment children were paired with non-English-speaking control group children. The mean number of new objectives mastered by the treatment and control groups for the seven VORT BCP Strands were compared through the application of t tests for correlated means. The results are summarized in Table 5. None of these tests achieved statistical significance. The expected growth in skill behavior at school was not shown.

It should be noted that in analyzing these data, no attempt was made to relate gains to the frequency with which parents attended workshops. Hence, much of the treatment group data undoubtedly pertains to children whose

TABLE 5

COMPARISONS OF MEAN GAINS OF STUDENTS OF PARTICIPATING (TREATMENT) AND NON-PARTICIPATING (CONTROL) PARENTS ON SEVEN VORT BCP STRANDS

Strand**	Group	Mean Gain	N Pairs	S.D.	Mean* Difference	S.D.d	t
23	Treatment	3.612	31	5.64	0.645	5.31	0.664
23	Control	2.967		4.29			
24	Treatment	4.60	31	4.47	-0.033	4.86	-0.03o
24	Control	4.63		4.55			
25	Treatment	3.74	31	3.73	-0.645	5.08	-0.70
25	Control	4.39		4.49			
26	Treatment	5.032	31	4.57	0.258	5.69	0.248
26	Control	5.032		4.96			
28	Treatment	3.516	31	1.875	-1.12	5.55	-1.25
28	Control	4.709		2.170			
32	Treatment	5.16	31	4.89	0.645	5.91	0.761
32	Control	4.06		6.42			
33	Treatment	4.16	31	3.76	0.677	4.87	0.761
33	Control	3.48		4.27			

* Positive values denote that Treatment Group gains are larger than Control Group gain; negative scores, that Control Group gains are larger than Treatment Group gains.

**Strand 23: Adaptive Behaviors;
Strand 24: Impulse Control;
Strand 25: Interpersonal Relations;
Strand 26: Responsible Behaviors;
Strand 28: Self-Confidence;
Strand 32: Attention Span; and
Strand 33: Task Completion.

parents attended only one or two sessions and therefore received little training. Thus, the length of treatment may have been too short to produce differential effects.

V. PLANS FOR CONTINUED OPERATION

An application for Title IV-C funding to continue the project in 1981-82 has not been made, and the project will not be offered in the same format. Given the continued and increasing demands on clinical staff in responding to referrals of students for evaluation for possible special education placement, and given the high demands of a project such as this one on clinical staff as group leaders and on clinical supervisory staff for training and orientation, and on professional administrative staff for communication with the large numbers of schools and offices involved, it is unlikely that the program will be continued in 1981-82. The efforts of the two program years were fruitful in that many parents did receive training that they reported to be helpful; a program manual and evaluation materials were developed and will be available; and future parent training programs of the Division of Special Education will benefit from the experience gained in this program. Future parent training programs would benefit from the following characteristics:

--smaller target population;

--more time set aside for planning with the administrators of field personnel, both instructional and clinical, and more communication about the program to field personnel;

--earlier notification of target parents;

--more homogeneous groupings of parents, according to their children's ages and levels of functioning;

--a greater variety of formats, including some series of fewer and shorter sessions (e.g., eight one-and-a-half hour sessions);

--more uniform training of workshop leaders facilitated by preparation of a written curriculum and policy manual and more time devoted to orientation and training.

The consequence of these changes should be a more stable enrollment and attendance pattern, which would increase the probability of achieving significant gains. The manual developed during the two years of funding will be useful in training group leaders and providing a more structured and consistent series of workshops.